On display at the entrance to the upper gallery floor was a statue called "Early Sorrow" by noted Belfast sculptor Patrick MacDowell (1799 - 1870) now held in storage at the Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra. The work was rendered in a graceful neo-classical style and depicts a young girl holding a mortally wounded dove against her breast. Patrick MacDowell, from a humble background was apprenticed at 16 to a coach builder in London. However, on the recommendation of artist John Constable, he went to Royal Academy Schools and he exhibited at the Academy from 1822 until his death.

In Belfast, MacDowell is famous for his Marquis of Donegal statue (1855); otherwise more commonly known as "The Black Man" statue. There is however, a case of mistaken identity surrounding "The Black Man" statue. Originally erected on a plinth near Royal Belfast Academical Institution it was later moved to a location in the City Hall. Nevertheless "The Black Man" is a term that is still commonly used by Belfast people when referring to that particular location in the city. The statue of Henry Cooke (erected on the same plinth), which replaced MacDowell's has inadvertently, ever since that time assumed the famous name of "The Black Man." If you were to visit MacDowell's "Marquis of Donegal" in Belfast City Hall, you would easily believe the reason for the naming of the original "Black Man" as it is made from a blackened bronze cast.

His other work included a life size marble statue of the Earl of Chichester on his deathbed attended by his mother, which can also be seen in the entrance to Belfast City Hall.

Museum exhibits at the Shankill Museum and Library had included one of Northern Ireland's best known objects – the Ulster Museum's famous mummy Takabuti, an Egyptian Mummy from the 7th Century B.C. Also exhibited were the drums of the 9th Royal Irish Rifles, the local regiment known as the West Belfast Volunteers who fought at the battle of the Somme in 1916. There were traditional household artefacts displayed which are now held in the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. Also of interest was a Native American canoe which has subsequently been exhibited at the Ulster Museum, Belfast.

The Belfast Coat of Arms is portrayed on the stained glass window and the pediment outside. Images such as the bell, the seahorse, the ship and the chained wolf indicate the merchant classes and the maritime importance of Belfast. The motto 'Pro tanto Quid Retribuamus' is Latin and translates to 'what return shall we make for so much' from the Bible Psalm 116 v12.

Major refurbishment of the exterior and interior of the building was completed in 2011 by H & J Martin at a cost of £975,000.